

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4714

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 4738

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STADIS////////////////////////////////////

FOR DEPASST FOR EA MILLER AND AMBASSADOR STONE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, APER, LA, US

SUBJ: LAO-US RELATIONS

1. WE HAVE HAD QUESTION OF TIMING OF AMBASSADOR'S ARRIVAL VERY MUCH ON OUR MINDS OVER PAST MONTH. OUR ASSUMPTION, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND IS WASHINGTON'S, IS THAT AMBASSADOR SHOULD ARRIVE ONLY AFTER DEBRIS OF PAST HAS BEEN CLEARED AWAY. HE SHOULD NOT BE EXPOSED TO PETTY HARASSMENTS AND PICKY PROBLEMS OF EXTRICATING OURSELVES AND CREATING MORE MODEST MISSION ON NEW FOUNDATIONS. HE SHOULD ARRIVE WHEN THIS MISSION HAD ACHIEVED A DEGREE OF STABILITY AND SECURITY IN ITS OPERATIONS. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE HAVE BEEN FRENCH DIFFICULTIES DAILY. EVEN NOW OUR TWO COMPOUNDS -- ADMINISTRATIVE AND HOUSING -- ARE STILL OCCUPIED; NEARLY HALF OF MISSION STAFF IS IN EXILE IN THAILAND; WE HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN NEGOTIATING NON-USAID MATERIALS OUT OF THE COMPOUNDS WE TURNED OVER TO PGNU; AND WE ARE STILL UNDER AN INCIPIENT THREAT FROM RAL EMPLOYEES.

2. NEVERTHELESS, ASSUMING THAT WE CAN OBTAIN QUICK RETURN OF COMPOUNDS, WE CAN CONEIVE OF MORE SETTLED SITUATION DEVELOPING QUITE FAST, WITH MAJOR OUTSTANDING ISSUES BEING RESOLVED IN MATTER OF DAYS. WE BELIEVE THAT

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THERE WOULD FOLLOW A LULL IN OUR RELATIONS. HOWEVER, WE

EXPECT FURTHER WORSENING OF ECONOMIC SITUATION WITH ACCOMPANYING GROWING PL CONTROL OF POPULATION. WE SHOULD ALSO EXPECT GROWING PRESSURES FOR PROCEEDING RAPIDLY WITH NEGOTIATIONS ON FUTURE ASSISTANCE.

3. WE CAN THEREFORE ENVISAGE AMBASSADOR ARRIVING LATTER PART OF JULY -- AFTER IMMEDIATE BILATERAL PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN SETTLED AND BEFORE ECONOMIC AUSTERITY BEGINS TO BE DEEPLY AND WIDELY FELT. IT IS CERTAIN HOWEVER THAT HIS COMING UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WILL RAISE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF NEW ASSISTANCE AND PRODUCE HEAVY PRESSURES TO INITIATE IMMEDIATE NEGOTIATIONS TO THAT END.

4. PROBLEM THEN IS HOW BEST TO DIFFUSE THESE EXPECTATIONS, AND WE WONDER WHETHER WE MIGHT NOT BEGIN TO GET QUIETLY ON AIRWAVES HERE THE THOUGHT THAT BILATERAL ASSISTANCE HAS PROVEN A DISAPPOINTMENT AND HAS CREATED SERIOUS FRICTIONS WITH PGNU. THEREFORE, IT MIGHT BE BEST TO DISPENSE WITH SUCH ASSISTANCE. INSTEAD, US WOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT TO ALL INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WHICH ARE WORKING IN LAOS -- WHO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFDAC -- AND FOR TIME BEING IT WOULD SEEM PREFERABLE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE THROUGH SUCH INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES. WE MIGHT TRY TO QUANTIFY THE AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO SUCH PROGRAMS FOR LAOS. (WE CAN OBTAIN AMOUNTS OF AID FROM UN AGENCY REPS HERE AND DEPARTMENT MIGHT PROVIDE US WITH PERCENT US CONTRIBUTION TO EACH AGENCY.) OF COURSE, THIS WOULD NOT BE VERY SATISFACTORY TO PGNU, AND PARTICULARLY TO PL, BUT AT LEAST IT IS A LINE OF ARGUMENT AND BETTER THAN SAYING THAT THE WATER IS CUT OFF.

5. IF PUSH COMES TO SHOVE, WE MIGHT ALSO CONSIDER TAKING LINE THAT WHILE THE PGNU HAS PREPARED AN AGREEMENT OF COOPERATION AND TALKED OF HAVING AMERICAN EXPERTS, IT HAS NOT PROVIDED US WITH ANY CONCRETE IDEA OF THE KIND OF AID IT HAD IN MIND. BEFORE WE PURSUE ANY DISCUSSIONS ON A BASIC AGREEMENT, WE COULD SAY IT MIGHT BE BETTER FOR PGNU TO LET US FIRST KNOW WHAT IT WANTS. ONCE IT HAS DETERMINED ITS NEEDS, PGNU MIGHT THEN SEND MISSION

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TO WASHINGTON TO REVIEW WHOLE MATTER. THIS TACTIC WOULD HAVE MERIT OF PLAYING FOR TIME, SINCE PLANNING FUNCTION WITHIN PGNU IS IN COMPLETE MUDDLE AND IS INCAPABLE OF PRODUCING ANY PLAN OR PROJECT THAT CAN PROVIDE BASIS FOR ASSISTANCE.

6. IF END JULY ARRIVAL OF AMBASSADOR FOR WHATEVER REASON IS NOT SATISFACTORY TO DEPARTMENT, WE FRANKLY HAVE

DIFFICULTIES IN IDENTIFYING ANOTHER PROPITIOUS PERIOD. THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS, CERTAINLY THROUGH THE NEXT THREE-FOUR MONTHS BEFORE THE HARVEST, ARE UNRELIEVABLY BLEAK. THIS IS TIME OF YEAR WHEN HISTORICALLY COUNTRY HAS NEEDED ASSISTANCE FOR THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES TO MAKE IT TO THE NEXT HARVEST. WHILE LAOS HAS BEEN PROMISED AID BY MANY COUNTRIES, LITTLE AS YET HAS BEEN DELIVERED. BY THE END OF THE MONTH, UNLESS THE RUSSIANS COME THROUGH IN TIME, WITH THEIR PROMISED DELIVERIES, THERE WILL BE SERIOUS POL SHORTAGE. EVEN IF FEOF IS SIGNED, WE DO NOT SEE OTHER DONORS MAKING FULL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR SECOND HALF CY 75 WITHOUT US PARTICIPATION, AND WE HAVE VERY CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT NEITHER RUSSIANS NOR CHINESE WANT TO HELP WITH THIS SORT OF ASSISTANCE. THERE WILL THEN BE SERIOUS FOREIGN EXCHANGE SHORTAGE, WITH ACCOMPANYING RISING PRICES FOR INCREASINGLY SCARCE IMPORTED GOODS, INCLUDING FOODSTUFFS. THE ECONOMIC DETERIORATION AND CONSEQUENT SOCIAL UNREST IN THE CITIES CAN ONLY BE CONTROLLED BY INCREASINGLY HEAVY POLICE ACTION.

7. THERE IS OF COURSE THE ALTERNATIVE OF NOT HAVING AN AMBASSADOR HERE AND LEAVING MISSION UNDER A CHARGE. IN A WAY IT WOULD REFLECT MORE ACCURATELY THE QUALITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIP AT THIS TIME; IN ANOTHER, HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE SUCH CLEAR SIGNAL OF LOSS OF AMERICAN INTEREST THAT IT WILL FURTHER DEEPEN THE GROWING HOPELESSNESS OF THE GREAT MAJORITY OF LAO WHO ARE NOT COMMUNISTS AND WHO FEAR THE NEW ORDER. IT MIGHT ALSO BE FINAL FACTOR IN PERSUADING PL THAT AMERICAN CONNECTION WAS NOT WORTH MAINTAINING. (IF A DECISION IS MADE TO KEEP OUR REPRESENTATION AT LEVEL OF CHARGE, WE BELIEVE THAT PRESENT CHARGE SHOULD NOT BE KEPT AT POST TOO MUCH LONGER. OF NECESSITY, HE HAS NOT EARNED THE UNDYING

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AFFECTION OF THE PRIMIN AND FONMIN WHO ARE THE KEY OFFICIALS HERE. A FRESH PERSON UNSULLIED BY THE HASSLES OF THE PAST THREE MONTHS WOULD GIVE A NEW FACT TO THE MISSION.)

8. THIS MESSAGE WAS IN TYPEWRITER WHEN STATE'S 160796 ARRIVED. I AM SENDING IT NEVERTHELESS TO SHOW DEPARTMENT WE HAVE BEEN THINKING ALONG SAME LINES.

CHAPMAN

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